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ABSTRACT

Five students from a Boston high school and 35 from Lincoln-Sudbury took part in an alternate semester consisting of 5 units: Outward Bound, environmental issues, urban, rural, and river/building. Students had to be juniors or seniors, have parental permission, and meet graduation requirements. The alternate semester began with Outward Bound, a three week winter survival course in north central Maine. This unit was termed the most successful and came closest to meeting its goals of establishing group unity, building individual self-confidence, expanding self-awareness, and encouraging an appreciation of the wilderness. The unit termed least successful was environmental issues. Students felt the series of lectures and films were irrelevant. The purpose of the urban unit was to study the urban environment and to provide the students with an opportunity to pursue interests and meet people with different life styles. The students lived with Boston families and worked for public and private groups in education, politics, health, and business. In the rural unit, various students worked on farms, in a historical restoration project, in one-room schools, in a fish hatchery, for a veterinarian, etc. The river/building unit was planned and executed by the students who, with $200 and lumber from an old barn, constructed a 16 x 16, two-story, dormered building in Grafton, Vermont. Evaluations by students, staff, parents, and employers are included. (AN)

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LINCOLN - SUDBURY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

Sudbury, Massachusetts

ALTERNATE

SEMESTER

An Evaluation

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ALTERNATE SEMESTER 1972

by

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A report of a joint venture by

- Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School
- Copley Square High School
- Hurricane Island Outward Bound School

FOREWORD

One Student's Expectations of Alternate Semester (written in January, 1972):

> "My journal - mainly my expectations of the Alternate Semester Program ...
>
> It's been a long time since I was into me and together - if I ever was - I want to find me. In losing myself I denied relationships with other people - I want to get into some people - into love - and out of need and dependency. I need to find strength in me. Find a direction, learn about lives I only read about and fantasized in both the city and the country. I want to become whole and solid; strength, understanding and love. I want to have independence of thought and gain or be reunited with the confidence of being able to make or break it on my own...my security to be me. Stop running. Be able to be part of a group and benefit from its functioning - be a leader and be led, get out of Sudbury's world and into the outside. Know the truth, say and be the truth - honesty with myself and others - learn to judge its return with truth - to know me. I want to be all I believe in. I don't want to hear just talk from myself - listen and feel - gestalt closures - pass the impasse, first finding it. How, not why, and now, not later or pasts. I want to know me well enough not to use sight as a judge or point of decision with myself and others (my inside and its outside). I want to learn to say no because I want something or someone more.....I want to lose passive and 'I don't cares' and 'I don't knows' and feeling sorry for myself - I don't want to hit upon ego rap either, don't want to get on myself no more, get rid of extremes and extensive analysis - growth - learn life!"

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I. Introduction

II. Outward Bound Unit

III. Environmental Issues Unit

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INTRODUCTION

I. Purpose of Alternate Semester

Alternate Semester was total immersion into a world away from the classroom from February to June. The students moved from the isolation and biting winds of the Maine winter, to the crowds, steel, and cement of Boston, and finally to the quiet calm of spring in rural New England.

This series of experiences which we called Alternate Semester was the result of a year of planning by students and teachers dissatisfied with more conventional education. Work began on the program in the spring of 1971. The pilot program ran the second semester of the 1971-72 school year. All those involved had hoped to devise a program that could be free of ties to a particular building and could provide opportunities to discover areas, life-styles, and careers previously unexplored.

Some of the experiences were to be group ones, others were to be individual, and it was hoped that the combination would enable the student both to learn more about himself and to reach out more confidently to other people.

II. Students and Credits

Most of the students and staff who assisted with the planning of the program eventually participated in it. This was very important and gave the students a tremendous sense of accomplishment at the conclusion.

When the program actually started in February, there were thirty-five Lincoln-Sudbury students and five students from the Copley Square High School in Boston. The only definite requirements for participation in the program were to be either a junior or senior, to have parental permission and be able to meet high school graduation requirements. Each Lincoln-Sudbury student earned twelve credits. These were divided as follows: two English, two history, two math, two science, two physical education, and two unspecified.

The academic ability and motivation of the students varied considerably. Some were bright, able, and had accomplished much in school; others were potentially competent, but for a variety of reasons had not performed well; a few were not academically oriented. Of the thirty-five Lincoln-Sudbury students who began the program in February, all but one finished in June. We had to ask this one student to leave the program in April because he was unable to meet the expectations of his employer or handle the responsibilities of the program.

The Copley Square School selected their five students from a number of applications. These students all took part in Outward Bound, but could only participate in some of the other units since the school expected them to maintain their regular academic work. They did not receive credit for their Alternate Semester work.

III. Staff

There were six members of the Lincoln-Sudbury staff who worked with Alternate Semester. Three worked with the program for the entire period. No one was full time; the director was released from three of her four classes; the two assistants were released from two of their five. The remaining staff each participated in the program for one, two or three week periods during which time they were given a substitute for their regular classes.

IV. Cost

The total cost of the program is difficult to determine precisely as some costs were hidden. The students raised $4,000 themselves; the School Committee and Outward Bound each contributed $7,000 for the Outward Bound Unit; each Lincoln-Sudbury student paid $150 tuition. The School Committee also provided $1,000 for University of Massachusetts interns. Because these thirty-five Alternate Semester students were no longer in regular classes at the high school, sections in history, math, and English were dropped to release staff.

The Alternate Semester Budget is shown as follows:

Item	Needs	Fund Raising	Tuition	L.S.R. Budget
Staff	2½ teachers assigned to independent study courses			
	4 interns - U. of Mass. and B. U. $1,000			$1,000
Outward Bound Unit	14,000	$7,000 from Hurricane Island		7,000
Food expenses and reimbursement to host families	9,250	4,000 scholarships raised by students	$5,250	
Vehicles	(See Lincoln-Sudbury Regional equipment budget)			
Evaluation	(See Lincoln-Sudbury Regional budget $500 earmarked for Alternate Semester			
		Fund Raising and Tuition		L.S.R. Budget
TOTALS	$24,250	$16,250		$8,000

V. Units

There were five units in the program. The Outward Bound Unit was three weeks and took place in north central Maine; the Environmental Issues Unit was two weeks and took place at Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School; the Urban Unit which was centered in Boston and the Rural Unit which covered all New England were each five weeks long; finally there was a three week River and Building Unit in Grafton, Vermont. The purpose and content of each unit varied and is explained specifically in the report.

VI. Purpose of this report

In this report the staff has attempted a kind of evaluation in which we summarize and collate the impressions and reactions, praise and criticism of all participants, parents, students, staff, and employers.

II. Outward Bound Unit

"Weight on my back, not in my mind --
Holes in my feet, no longer in my
foundation."

Outward Bound Unit

I. Introduction

Alternate Semester began with Outward Bound -- a three week winter survival course run by the Hurricane Island Outward Bound School at a former logging camp in the Moosehead Lake Region of north central Maine.

The students, according to Outward Bound tradition, were divided into watches (four groups of ten) and remained in these groups throughout the course. Using Grant Farm as a base, the watches went on a series of expeditions, building to a five day final. The course also included a three day solo, instruction in first aid, and lectures on ecology. The primary challenge was learning to work together in the cold.

Outward Bound was perhaps the most overwhelmingly successful unit. It appears in retrospect to be the one which came closest to meeting its goals of establishing group unity, building individual self-confidence, expanding self-awareness, and encouraging appreciation of the wilderness. In the final evaluation session the students felt unanimously that Outward Bound had been essential to Alternate Semester and the best possible way to begin. There were feelings on the part of some that the course could have been more stressful (although an equal number felt it was sufficiently difficult), that the division into four groups sometimes hindered our single group goal (but no one could see an alternative -- the small group is basic to the Outward Bound way), and that the role of the Lincoln-Sudbury staff was somewhat confusing (it was, but this bothered the staff more than the students). Possibly the most significant thing is that four months later, at the end of the program, the students' feelings about Outward Bound remained extremely strong and many in their final evaluations cited ways in which they felt the Outward Bound experience had influenced them throughout the program and perhaps changed them permanently.

II. Student Evaluations

The students wrote about their Outward Bound experience on three separate occasions. They wrote a course impressions for the Outward Bound staff, a similar thing for the Lincoln-Sudbury staff, and many included a discussion of Outward Bound in their final evaluations. This report does not include anything written for the Hurricane Island staff since that material was still unavailable at the time this was written.

Immediately upon return the students all wrote a description of their most vivid Outward Bound experience. Some of these descriptions are printed below. All are extremely personal

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and illustrate the intensity of feeling which Outward Bound generated -- an exhilaration that comes from exceeding one's expected limits, a need for group closeness and support, and a responsiveness to nature.

1. "Up Little Spencer, with a pack on my back, a drive within me urged me on. Onward: climbing higher; with wind blowing hair, bodies swaying, snow stinging rosy cheeks, huffing and puffing. I was an explorer; inner excitement traveling over all aching...farther.

   "A day later, the wind was still raging and circles of snow whirling. But seeing everything in a haze, between hiding faces from the day, stopped walking. My legs were still moving, unbalanced. With every gust, another bit of my confidence broke away. The wind whipped me till I cried. I wished the tears weren't falling. I wasn't very tired. I knew I could go on, but inside an indescribable feeling of everything and a void of confusion crept over me: flashes of frustrations, mountains, loss of a loved one....all fused together, distinct for a second, and unclear again. I was alone facing the cold, snow, and wind. Rafe said to me, 'Isn't it a pity that to gain satisfaction out of life one has to go through so much pain and suffering.' The tears stopped falling from my eyes."

2. "It was the last day of final, and we were coming home. It wasn't far - we were to be home before noon, but everyone, myself included, was tired and hungry since we hadn't felt much like eating lately. I was near the front of the line waiting to break trail. In the new snow it was hard for everyone, but hardest for first man. We were going fast and I almost had to run to keep up, my legs felt about to fall off. At last my turn came - it was the longest five minutes in my life. Several times I turned around to check the time and finally I asked for relief - I felt I could walk no further, but I was told to go on. When, at last, my time was up, I stepped off the trail to let my reliever pass and as he went by he said simply - 'You did a good job.' Suddenly it all seemed worthwhile."

3. "One incident that stands out in my mind, is the day that our watch journeyed to Bear Pond on our training expedition. This was the first opportunity that I have had to navigate. Constantly through the course, the thought that crossed my mind was whether I was pulling my weight in the group. That day was the first time that I knew that I was contributing something to the watch.

"When we reached Bear Pond, mixed feelings poured through me. Exhilaration, a sense of accomplishment, self-confidence, and sheer joy. It wasn't the fact that I had done anything remarkable or difficult. Anybody in the group could have navigated us to Bear Pond. It was simply the fact that the responsibility had fallen on me to get us to the destination. It was something that I really didn't think I could do, but I did it."

4. "On our third day at Grant Farm, we loaded our toboggans with our tents and dragged them off into the woods. We then set up a camp site - practicing for the training expedition we were leaving on the next day.

"When we had the tents all figured out and set up, Ralph explained what we could have done better. Then he talked briefly about training expedition. I was scared. I was terrified. I didn't want to leave on expedition. I didn't want to camp in the woods. We all stood in a circle around our tents, looking apprehensively at Ralph and one another. It was getting late. We had to pack and get back to the farm. Ralph stopped talking. We looked at each other. We all looked scared. I felt like crying. But I smiled instead. Standing across from me, Jeb and Doug saw me and smiled back. Barry then saw them and smiled. Then Ralph and Sharon and Leslie smiled. And Bob and Nat and everyone started smiling. I felt relieved of my fear. I felt secure and happy. We smiled again, and packed up and left for the farm."

5. "One of my experiences that proved to be quite important to me was the day I was climbing Little Spencer. In our group we decided to carry six packs between our group. They matched us up with another person and I was matched with Ray, my leader. I decided to carry the pack first. The day was snowing and windy out as we climbed Little Spencer. While climbing, I fell going up the mountain and twisted my ankle. The kids in my group helped me up and told me to give the pack to Ray but I remembered what Ray told me. He said when I got tired of carrying the pack to think about it for an hour before giving it to him. At that time I felt down and I wanted to prove to myself that I could carry it up to the summit. What gave me the strength to do this was Ray and my own determination. When we reached the first summit Ray came up to me and asked if I could make it and I said I could. So when I reached the final destination, I proved to myself that I could do something if I was really determined to do so."

6. "It was Sunday morning and there was over a foot of virgin snow on the ground. The toboggans were packed and the snowshoes buckled. The first half mile was a steep uphill grade. We had the choice of returning to Grant Farm on a direct trail route or by navigating a new trail via Lazy Tom Pond. By the top of the hill everyone was out of breath and feeling downtrod enough to rationalize taking the easy way back. Ralph asked us if it was worth marring a really good expedition because of one obstacle. It wasn't. I gained a second wind and the trip home to the farm increased my total experience and confidence immensely because we didn't yield."

7. "Climbing Little Spencer was a long, hard climb. The false summits can be really frustrating to someone who hasn't climbed many mountains. When we finally reached the marked summit, everybody was tired but satisfied that they'd reached the top. There was one more peak though and I was interested to see what it was like out there, so I decided to run over and take a look.

   "When I got there, I found the view to be one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.

   "The setting sun threw golden streaks across the sky above the horizon and there was a thin haze over everything that caught and diffused the sunlight until it seemed to glow.

   "The sides dropped off sheer so that I could see right below me, yet if I lifted my head just a bit, I could see for hundreds of miles in any direction.

   "The quiet solitude of it made it seem the stereotype mountain top, but there it was, and there I was, separate; but for a short time, together."

8. "Before our bus ride home, I followed a pattern not unusual for me. I went off by myself to the shack that morning where nobody else was. It was early morning and the sun was trying to peep over a cloud. Brought my journal there but I don't have it here. I could not see Kahtadin but I saw Spencer. I think I wrote something like this - 'Spencer, I enjoyed the summits of you and your neighbors. I enjoyed the hikes to your tops. You were all beautiful. I hope to see you again. You provided the most beautiful hours of Outward Bound which would have been beautiful enough without you. Good-by, 'twas beautiful.' I wrote the last two words on the snow in the shack. I remember a song learned at camp and the mountains are singing in a chorus.

   Remember the times you've had here.
   Remember when you're away.

Remember the friends you've made here
And don't forget to come back some day.
Remember the hills and woodlands
That were all so nice for you.
For you George belong to the wilderness
And the wilderness belongs to you."

9. "Them pushing me pushing them - push, push

"Wind passes skinning my face,
The sun glares - my eyes squint.
My skin tans, raisin complexion.
Weight on my back not in my mind
Holes in my feet, no longer in my foundation
Bathing in my own heat; wet stenchy perfumes.

"Blue, blue sky - a spectrum of color circles round the sun
Weathered wood-like abstract sculptures lay on the snow covered ices of ragged lake.
Snow graced peaks reach to sketchy clouds.

"Alone - together So far from so much in this crazy world.
Ceaseless time lacking its constant ticking reminder.
Moneyless - mindless
FEELING! All that is real - natures mild and meek - strength and command
Close to me, to them - pure life - our understanding, my awareness
Appreciation, growth, love for life
The dizzy, dancing way I feel."

10. "Well, if it comes down to particular extraordinary experience I had - I can't think of any now. But the overall experience was so intense for me, I think I can feel an incredible change - either now or coming. I feel alive. Maybe for the first time in my life. I feel more aware of my senses - sight, touch, hearing...I can see - even now after three or four washings - all the tiny little creases and cracks in my fingers; soft things are so much more soft. I'm more aware of other people and their feelings. I like 'me' better. I'm a little more happy inside. I feel more ease loving and helping others. Something inside is growing and changing. I want to grow and learn and love. It feels good. Alive!"

III. Student Final Evaluations

After four months of other experiences, the students in their final evaluations still stress the feeling of group closeness which Outward Bound established; the self-discoveries, increased self-confidence and sensitivity which Outward Bound

initiated, and the impetus which this intense experience gave to the entire semester. As can be seen from what the students themselves say, it is at the end still very important to them.

1. "Outward Bound brought us together in a way and tore us all apart too. It built up my image of me and destroyed that image. The same moments were fantastically creative and destructive all at once. Who am I?"

2. "Outward Bound was a beautiful way to start this program; for me, it was an easier way to open up and love people and show them I cared. It also helped me to see that I could do anything I wanted to do no matter how trying - physically or mentally."

3. "The Outward Bound Unit was the most valuable for me because it was such a kick, such a bang. It was a sudden start that got things moving, that got me changing. And changing is what Alternate Semester was all about for me."

4. "Outward Bound focused around cold, snow, winds, and Grant Farm which expanded to challenge me physically at first, and then mentally. Because of the living conditions I became more self-disciplined and confident, less selfish, and more sensitive to people, not just personally but collectively. We were divorced from our accustomed daily patterns in an environment which forced us to become a cooperating, tightly knit group. It was hard but I loved it."

5. "I had done some winter camping already. I had taken a February Nimbus course (Lincoln-Sudbury Outward Bound type program) the year before. I thought that there was nothing more that I could learn about living in the winter, but I was wrong."

6. "Outward Bound to me was an integral part of the whole experience for it provided us with the necessary foundations of understanding, trust and general motivation towards new and different experiences... Outward Bound was definitely the keystone that got everything moving and kept up the fast pace the whole time. You need something of this kind to bring everybody together and get people to work as a unit towards the same goal."

7. "By the end of the first week I realized I don't have to suffer; it's all in the mind."

8. "The Outward Bound unit showed us the importance of the group. It was the group feeling that was produced and lasted. We were able to stick together incredibly well for the rest of the semester. This was vital for the spirit of Alternate Semester."

9. "Outward Bound - what a start. It's like having your whole world shaken upside down - but then it's to find out how stable you really are. I found out that I'm a really hard worker. I was amazed. I found out I could make myself get along with people while I was screaming at them inside. And I found out I didn't communicate in stress well enough to give other people the feeling of accomplishment I felt when we left it. I could do anything on my own, but I couldn't guide others to it. I am a half-leader."

10. "Though not as physically challenging as I had anticipated, the stress reached a happy medium allowing plenty of other things to filter into each experience. I have often thought that more strain could have brought us closer together, more dependent on each other for our very survival. As it was, room still remained for superficiality to conceal people if they felt like reserving themselves.

"Very frequently during the following months, it came to mind that I was going about things in an Outward Bound way. I had gained a deeper sense of responsibility towards people around me, and some magical compassion that there is part of you in everyone, therefore not to judge people so hastily. Also, I could remind myself of the determination and discipline that another hill stretch of snowshoeing took and the feeling of gratification when you had mounted that hill without letting yourself rest. So in Boston I could keep myself reading all night, every newspaper I could get my hands on until I knew how some issue changed from day to day.

"Not to mention efficiency - in northern Maine during the month of February it's something to keep in mind. Perhaps being in Pine Watch 'You guys are all business!' had something to do with our training and surely Bob Rheault did! But organization, planning, etc. are things that my father is always concerned with, so Outward Bound helped me to see how much sense they make in any activity."

11. "On the school bus ride to Grant Farm, punctuated as it was by a very loud flat tire, I felt apprehensive, happy and a little mad. I didn't have any but the vaguest idea what I was getting myself into, and only hoped that I would enjoy myself and that other people would enjoy my company. Our arrival I remember as being cold and dark with lights floating through the confusion of people - I wondered idly if it was twenty-five degrees below as I was told it would be. There seemed to be an incredible amount of snow up there, and very little between the vastness of it and us. That night remains a warm tangled blur of new faces and new impressions but I know I felt comfortable and a little rowdy.

"The next few days were clear and brilliant, the snow glittered whitely and there was a pristine majesty about the lakes, pines, and mountains that sticks in my mind; I was awed by the huge freedom of the land, but in the physical pressures of long hikes through it on snowshoes, and in the newness of the people I linked with, I had no time to be anything but mindlessly glad.

"During this time forty students and eleven instructors had become organized and stabilized into four watches and daily routines. My watch, Cedar, was led by Frank Simon with Dianne Pullo as assistant leader. Our quarter of the group, ten people, consisted of Dinty, Jef, Lisa B., Lisa L., Bob T., Nancy C., Tad, Don, Bill A., and I. Dinty, Bob and Jef led the humor department of Cedar and kept us laughing through almost any contingency, and the Cedar sense of hilarity made many uncomfortable moments warm. Tad and Don were, to a certain extent, stabilizing forces in our group, and Tad's fire holes were the ultimate in luxury. As a group, we were the least rigid and the jolliest, but also the least responsible and, perhaps, considerate.

"Every morning while at Grant Farm we arose at about 6:00 and after throwing on innumerable layers of clothing, gathered in front of the small house for our morning run...the air, dry and cold, froze our breath into ice crystals that gathered on every exposed hair - eyelashes, brows, beards...the run usually exhausted me but I loved the strain, the feeling of strength and wideness in the air.

"Four days after we arrived Cedar set out on training expedition. In the time schedule of the program Cedar was first to most of the planned camping spots (almost always on a lake) and we were very lucky to have the clean untrampled wilderness ahead of us where we went... the groups were in pairs, timewise, and we were paired with the other notably uproarious group, Spruce.

"Once out in the woods we developed a comfortable-trucking-pace with toboggans, swishing and crackling and occasionally laboring through the white and brown Maine winter woods...singing spasmodically, in the clear air; stopping to remove or replace layers of clothing; to eat; to take bearings.

"Our first night on expedition was disgruntled and incompetent; it took us three hours to get off the next morning... After that, though, we learned with each new experience and developed methods, routines, and a certain degree of efficiency...our second night of training expedition was fantastic, for lack of a better word. Bill Aughton, our course director and Bunny, the

kitchen worker of Grant Farm, were out on their own, and made camp with us. Spruce was just down Otter Pond - and we all gathered together and square danced into the night. What a night! The bonfire in the middle lighting up the pond; people singing around it; shadowy forms stomping in the snow, in short-sleeves, to Dinty's harmonica - everything was just right...

"The next day after navigating an unmapped cliff, we traveled down Ragged Lake back home, as it was to us then. Thirty people - blobs of blue and red color, strung out over a mile or two of white windy lake; dominated by the lump of Big Spencer Mountain...the four toboggans swished and slid and bumped effortlessly along the flat snowy surface while the loose numbers of people drifted in between and around and behind them, tripping each other into the snow, playing tag, stomp and tangle, chasing until the pursued inevitably tripped on the curved tips of his snowshoes...

"The next day at Grant Farm we were granted the welcome privilege of a bath, out of a number ten can... being dirty was an accepted fact of existence, so being clean was blessedly welcome. I even felt pretty that night...we square danced in the barn, which threatened immiment collapse, and rumbled that night throughout the upstairs of the house. Or rather, the guys rumbled and the girls looked on, laughing...

"The next day Cedar and Spruce were led out on a little track in the woods, and deposited one by one for solo. The line of silent kids trekking through the woods radiated vague apprehension and some bravado...interspersed with small bursts of gaiety...

"I was a little frightened-irrationally-but more occupied with happy anticipation, and schemes for thinking and building. Left at my solo spot, I waited for the small herd of blue and red blobs to disappear uphill among the trees, and then poked around aimlessly for a few minutes getting oriented and taking in my surroundings...by myself - what to do? I felt a little at loose ends, but then my eye caught a fallen tree with beautiful clean wood projecting from the broken ends, and captivated my attention and my knife for several minutes...marking the tree in my mind for the next day. I set about gathering boughs for my bed.

"A chorus of coughs had gathered momentum off in the woods and pretty soon they were echoing. I felt comforted - treacherously...gathering boughs made me feel

completely alive - oddly - I drank in the blue of the sky and the warm gold of the slowly sinking sun on the trees...

"After stomping out a tent space in the snow and setting out a thick layer of boughs, I had a look around and discovered that my tent was exactly and precisely in the path of a large tree that was definitely about to come thundering down.

"I swore profoundly and set about moving. I moved up the hill a ways, set up again, and collected firewood until dark, when I lit a fire with one match (!) and cooked my alloted half package of stew. I thought stumbling and rushing thoughts as I ate, a little disquieting but more to be wondered at...

"Once painstakingly in my tent I wrote until the repeated freezings of my pen finally drove all inspiration out of my skull...

"Somewhere towards dawn I began to dream weird half-dreams...I thought that I had my head in the foot of my sleeping bag and couldn't breathe, then, that the tent was shouting and struggling to smother me...I slowly came up from under the heavy bag of disjointed imaginings, and found myself in my tent; it was down and I had a sore throat that felt like the father of all sore throats. My first inclination was to consider it merely another bad dream, but once out in the air I felt shocked and more than a little desperate. After trying in succession, to get wood, to put on my snowshoes, to get back in my sleeping bag - and being too cold and unable to breathe at times - I spent the rest of the morning wearing a track around my tent just to keep my blood from freezing.

"I spent the next two days asleep at Grant Farm.

"The day after the rest of Cedar and Spruce returned from solo we left for the Great Northern Paper Company's present operation on Caribou Lake. The three things that stand out in my mind about that trip were that it rained (and rained and rained), that most people were in lousy frames of mind, and the hike back - in the dark, in the wet and tramping along a stream bed, the hike seemed interminable. In a sense I enjoyed the dim, steady rhythm of the tramp, but I was certainly glad to see the Farm again...

"Final expedition...five days out in the woods, during which time we climbed two mountains, one lesser and one greater, bushwhacked miles and miles, survived a

minor blizzard, and also during which time I developed bronchitis.

"My feelings about final expedition are mixed...I loved what I saw and the people with me, but on the other hand, deplored my treacherous body and reacted very uneasily to being ill...

"Every time I am sick or injured I am pulled strongly in two directions; the first being a feeling of scorn for weakness and scorn for myself in my weakness; a desire to ignore it as unworthy - and the second a feeling of self-pity; that I ought to be well treated and taken care of.

"On Outward Bound I felt only the first attitude from the people I was with, and in this situation my reaction was to ignore the fact that I could barely breathe (which really isn't exaggeration) and, unhappily, make a bitch of myself.

"Evidently I succeeded so well that people didn't believe I was sick. Oh well.

"I was feeling relatively healthy when we climbed Big Spencer, and with the view, the slide down, and the crystal beauty of it, I was glad with a gladness I could feel in me from head to toe...

"I was very sad to leave Grant Farm, and I believe I was happier there than I have ever been and more comfortable with people my own age.

"What I learned isn't the kind of thing that I can classify or write down; but I know that I grew, matured a little; and came to a number of realizations of myself and others, that I must have missed otherwise...of my body and the value of physical movement: I had rarely exerted myself before Outward Bound and thus I learned a lot about my own limits and tolerances."

IV. Lincoln-Sudbury Staff Evaluation

The Lincoln-Sudbury Staff feels the Outward Bound course did have a very strong effect upon the group and particularly upon certain individuals. It gave the students a collective identity which supported them throughout the term. It also taught them how to work together. A good illustration of this was a simulated population explosion experiment which was conducted by two Boston University psychologists during the Environmental Issues Unit. The expected panic behavior did not occur; the group knew too well how to cope with difficult situations together. And there are ways in which the Outward Bound way carried into the River/Building Unit at the end (see River/Building section).

More apparent was the way Outward Bound affected individual students. All seemed touched by it in some way. There were no dramatic changes in character, no instant solutions to deeply-rooted personal problems -- it would be naive to expect either -- but there were significant changes in attitude. Several students who came to this experience as loners and outsiders, relaxed, were included and continued throughout the term to be increasingly self-confident. One boy discovered that for him personal satisfaction required involvement; one girl learned she was really a hard worker; another became better able to deal with fear; many left feeling better about themselves in some way -- and their behavior bore witness to these things throughout the semester. Outward Bound held out certain values which were a continual source of personal and group strength.

Another thing Outward Bound did was help break down barriers between staff and students. A redefinition of roles, which everyone felt was essential to this program, was a slow, painful, confusing task. No one was sure what the new roles should be, exactly what our positions should be vis a vis each other. This was never really clarified during the Outward Bound experience (Lincoln-Sudbury Staff were half assistants, half participants and never quite sure when they should hold back and when jump in) and remained a fairly important issue throughout the term (when to assert authority and when to let the group be autonomous, when to be close and supportive and when to be distant). But it was evident that neither staff nor students could even begin to deal with this issue without mutual trust and shared experiences. Outward Bound gave us a strong, solid start.

As positive an experience as the Outward Bound course was, there are a couple of ways in which it did not satisfy the hopes of the Lincoln-Sudbury staff. Throughout the planning work in the fall, there had been a real reluctance for any student to emerge as a leader. There was no one to whom the staff could turn, and all too often they had to assume the leadership role themselves. This remained true in Outward Bound and true to the end of the program. There was an increase in personal responsibility and group cooperation, but leadership remained deeply problematical and provided some degree of tension between staff and students throughout the term. (For more detailed discussion see Conclusion)

Another hope of the Lincoln-Sudbury staff was that Outward Bound would break down preconceptions students had of each other and eliminate cliques. There is no question that many students did gain a revised, more positive image of each other and reached out to people they had not been close to before. But the fact that many friendships were already very close tended to limit the degree to which the students could try on new behavior patterns and form new ties. For example, although the Copley Square students probably felt

relatively comfortable and included by the end, they were still "the Copley Square kids" and somehow separate.

Hopefully, this will be less of an issue another year when it is anticipated there will be a broader spectrum of Lincoln-Sudbury students, a greater proportion of Copley Square students, and possibly some students from another suburban high school.

This section includes the opinions of only the Lincoln-Sudbury staff since the Outward Bound staff course report was unavailable at this time.

III. Environmental Issues

"It was too much like school."

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Environmental Issues

The two week Environmental Issues Unit was the least successful one in the program. During this time the students were exposed to a continuous series of lectures, films, and activities which acquainted them with a variety of positions on the environmental crisis. The intent of the unit was to give them information which would hopefully make them more sensitive to the various environments they were going to experience.

The aspect of the program which the students felt was most successful and which came closest to meeting its goals were the field trips which took them to sewage treatment plants, power facilities, and a state forest. The reason for their enthusiasm was that they were experiencing and seeing problems for themselves rather than being told about them.

Although the students expressed interest in some of the films and lectures, the overall feeling was that this was not the best approach to environmental problems. One of the most frequently heard comments was that the unit was "too much like school." By this comment the students meant a couple of things. Since the intense mental and physical challenge of Outward Bound had prepared them for an experiential, participatory approach to learning, the inactivity of sitting and listening was frustrating and seemed antithetical to the aims of Alternate Semester. Also, many mentioned that it was hard to be back in the Lincoln-Sudbury environment again, particularly when an important reason for participating in Alternate Semester was to experience other environments.

Furthermore, it is apparent from the students' comments that for them the connection between this unit, as it existed, and the others was obscure at best. Many felt an awareness of environmental problems was important, however, and that a way should be found to work this unit into the program. Two excellent suggestions grew out of the final evaluation session and will be implemented next year.

1. Any study of environmental issues will be experience-oriented. Suggestions were made for: an ecology unit in Grafton, Vermont; a study of pollution problems, starting with small towns and building up to the city; some work for the State against pollution; projects like picking up trash, helping town dump recycling, publicizing the recycling idea in Lincoln-Sudbury area; a trip on the Nashua River (planned for this year but cancelled due to ice on river).

2. Instead of being an isolated two week unit following Outward Bound, it will be incorporated into an orientation and planning course, required of all Alternate Semester candidates during the first semester next year.

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Sample Student Comments on Environmental Issues

1. "To come back from this fantastic experience (Outward Bound) to school was very unsettling. The Environmental Issues Unit slips from my mind very easily. I think it lacked the momentum the rest of the course took."

2. "As has been said a number of times Environmental Issues followed too closely upon the heels of Outward Bound to have been either appreciated or enjoyed. After each long day of sitting in the hot high school auditorium I think we all could have sworn loudly. I know I could have and probably did. I also felt much of the material to be irrelevant; the movies that speak emphatically of the existence of a problem, and assail the viewer with pitiful sights, are very clearly unnecessary. It is current efforts, current dilemmas, specifics -- specific problems, answers, etc. that hold interest. Things we can see and touch and,perhaps, personally affect."

3. "I thought that the Environmental Issues Unit was totally irrelevant to the theme of the semester and that the Alternate Semester should cover material not available in the normal school program."

4. "The Environmental Issues Unit was a questioning time for me. I was asking myself how I could help solve any pollution or population problems, how I could get other people to see the problems. I was also set back by the sudden change from Maine to Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High School again...it was hard to sit still and do nothing, physically. I definitely got something out of it though...I think the overall program could have been presented differently with a little less of the normal school routine. Anyway - the Environmental Issues Unit kind of left me with a feeling of helplessness, many unanswered questions, and an urge to move on."

IV. Urban Unit

"The South End is no longer a foreign place. I have friends there now, the people I worked with, and the Browns."

Urban Unit

I. Introduction

Of all the units, the Urban was the most complicated, not only because of the variety of jobs and housing situations, but more importantly because of the very nature of the city.

The Urban and Rural Units were each five weeks long and could be done in any order. Thirty-one of the students did the Urban Unit first (March-April), three did it second (April-May) and four remained in the city for ten weeks. The purpose of the unit was to study the city environment, to provide the students with an opportunity to pursue their own interests and to meet people with different life-styles.

All but two students lived in the city. The majority lived with black families in the Mattapan-Dorchester area, found through the Concord Street Baptist Church. Seven of the boys and a University of Massachusetts Intern lived in an apartment in the South End (offered rent-free by Low Cost Housing, Inc.). The four remaining students lived with white families scattered throughout the city.

The students' jobs were varied. They worked for both public and private organizations in the areas of education, politics, health and business. (For a complete list see Appendix A.) In addition to each student's individual job, there was a group project working for Low Cost Housing, Inc. in the South End. This organization renovates apartments with volunteer labor and rents them to low income families. Most students scheduled one or two days a week for this project.

Once the students were in the city, the staff tried to visit them and their employers as often as possible. For some students this was three times, for most once or twice.

II. Student Evaluations

At the conclusion of the first Urban Unit, we had a one day evaluation session. At that time the students completed the following questionnaire which covered four categories: Job, Housing, Low Cost Housing Project, and General Comments. Where possible, we have given a composite of the students' responses.

A. Job

1. Who was the person you worked with most closely?

2. How would you describe your relationship with that person? (person you worked for) Did he/she take an interest in you? the program? Were you given enough responsibility?

   All thirty-four responses to this question were positive and enthusiastic.

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3. Who do you feel benefited more, you or your employer?

   Fourteen felt they benefited most. Thirteen felt it was of mutual benefit. Four felt the employer benefited most. Generally they (students) felt it took several weeks before they had gained enough confidence and knowledge to be of significant assistance. In some cases time was needed to define roles and develop a productive working relationship with the employer.

4. Give a brief description of your job.

5. Impressions about job -- challenges, frustrations, satisfactions?

   Most responses to this question mentioned the difficulties and tensions of being put into an unfamiliar situation for which they had little training. Other comments talked about how hard it could be to become sufficiently motivated in an unstructured situation.

   a. "I don't know if it was challenging. Thinking up a show and asking people to be in it, and meeting them in the lobby, and going down to the recording studio and empty spaces where no one can think of a thing to say made me feel sick to my stomach. I was so scared, but the minutes we were off the air I felt great, like I've put together this whole show that people will be listening to on Saturday morning, and it's all me, but five minutes later I felt sick again because I had to think up another show."

   b. "After I really got seeing how and why the organization functioned, it was extremely satisfying and I learned a lot from whatever I did. The first couple of weeks before I knew entirely what went on, it was awfully hard to face people; I would sit for three-quarters of an hour trying to make up my mind to call. I would type a letter four times before it was good enough. But once I got the idea of what was really going on, I could get into writing a letter to appeal for money as well as anybody."

   c. "I felt I never got it together totally in commitment. The job involves a lot of frustration and tedium in between the detective work. I hate that; I need to

be busy all the time or I feel I'm goofing off. But I learned to relax a little more; take things in stride a little more."

d. "It is a really good way of finding out about teaching and education. I found it very challenging and sometimes very difficult. I also became involved in trying to set up a new program which is one of the most difficult and complicated things I have undertaken. I was never as inventive as I wanted to be when I was working with the kids. There were always things I'd have done differently when we (staff) discussed how the morning had gone. So the next day I'd try out something different. I was free to do pretty much what I wanted to do."

e. "I was challenged with the great number of kids to control, understanding why kids acted as they did; just about the whole thing was challenging... It made me feel so good when I could sit down and work with a hyperactive kid (on the verge of being kicked out for misconduct) who would listen and try to understand for maybe fifteen minutes (quite a feat to keep thinking of new ways to say the same thing and keep their interest). Also to have them so excited about doing the Easter and Spring art projects with me... The whole thing was satisfying - I was rarely frustrated."

f. "The job wasn't challenging. A good bit of it was pretty dull. I was glad to be there, because most of the time I felt needed - they really appreciated the work I did. The best thing about the job was the people who were for the most part really nice and friendly. The first time I went there I really noticed who was black and who was white - but by the end, I didn't notice any more. I think that in itself made this a worthwhile experience."

6. Would you recommend the job to a student next year?

7. If so, would you recommend any changes?

All but three students said that they would recommend their job to someone next year and

few thought of any changes. Those that were suggested, however, were that the next students might profit if they had prior experience or if they had sufficient confidence to convince the employer that they were capable of more interesting and less routine work.

"Elma Lewis is really a neat place. I kind of wish that I had been able to do some work in classes - I didn't want to push that though - but for someone else working there I'd suggest that they try to work for a specific department."

8. Would preparing for the job be a worthwhile pre-requisite?

Twenty-nine students felt that there was no particular point in preparing for the job. However, in teaching and politics several students felt some background might be helpful.

9. Was five weeks enough time? too much? too little?

Twenty students felt that the five week period was too little time to spend at their job. Frequently, they had just gotten to the point where they understood things and could be of real assistance when it was time to leave. However, it is unclear that these same students would have liked to spend more time in the city as most of them preferred the rural unit to the urban and felt going home on weekends was very necessary.

10. Did you have enough time at the job? too much? too little?

Fourteen students felt that they had enough time at their jobs each day. Only five felt they had too little. The other reactions were mixed.

(a) "I should have picked one school and spent four days a week there."

(b) "There was too much actual field work and not nearly enough work in the offices and planning centers."

(c) "At times the job was boring and there was too much time, but at times there was also not enough."

11. Suggestions for students going into the same situation next year:

Some of these answers overlapped with those for No. 7. The most interesting and useful suggestion was that next year's students find out more about the job and their employer before making a decision.

B. Low Cost Housing

We asked the students three questions about their Low-Cost Housing experience.

1. React to your Low-Cost Housing experience.

Eleven students said they felt positively about their work for Low-Cost. Nine felt very uncertain about their experience there and nine felt very negatively about it. On the whole they were not interested in the unskilled work they were given when they had hoped to learn a substantial amount about carpentry.

2. How many days did you work for Low-Cost Housing?

The average number of days that each student worked there was six and one-half. One boy worked there for the entire period - twenty-three days-and two admitted that they never worked there at all.

3. Would you recommend working for Low-Cost Housing another year? If so - explain.

When asked if they would recommend that students work in this next year, seventeen said "yes". The most common qualifying statement was that the group should have a clearer understanding of the type of work and the degree of commitment required.

C. Housing

1. Comment on your living experience.

On the whole the students seemed excited and satisfied with their housing situations. Two students lived at home; one because her family did not feel the city was safe, and one because his parents were moving and needed his help. Both regretted living at home and felt that they missed a significant part of the urban experience.

Living with families in Mattapan, Dorchester, and the South End provided the students with the opportunity to get to know people whose life-styles were vastly different from their own. In most cases, they became quite close to some individuals in these families and expect to stay in contact with them. Although their living situation was not always easy, according to the students, it provided some of the most significant experiences of the Alternate Semester program.

(a) "I enjoyed the family a great deal. I don't really enjoy the same types of things they do but that's O.K. (as far as I'm concerned). I got along well with them but I think most of the family was inhibited by my quietness. Mr. D. was even rather annoyed with it. He was very aware of my quietness and seemed to take it as something against him or the ghetto (as he called it) or the family. He was afraid of a bad report on him.

"The loudness and constant attention started bothering me after the second week but it was a good experience."

(b) "In the city I stayed with the Brown family and did all of my work in the same neighborhood, the South End. I grew close to the Browns, got to know them and became part of the family for a time.

"Dan and I spent most of our time with Eric and Stephanie. They were the youngest and least wary of strangers. We spent some time with Steve and his friends up in his room and down at the community center playing basketball. I can remember feeling extremely out of place at the community center. Dan and I were the only whites there and there was quite a bit of knife-flashing and near fights, none of it directed at us. We talked a lot with George, a twenty-two year old boarder who had been wandering from city to city since he left home at sixteen. Mrs. Brown never talked much but that was her way. She was nice and I felt I knew her well at the end of my stay.

"Eric showed me his world eagerly. He showed me the neighborhood and introduced me to his friends. He took Dan and me sliding one time on the neighborhood hill. It was the cement slope underneath an overpass on a Massachusetts Pike exit. We slid on fiber glass roofing ripped from the waiting platform at the Back Bay station. Eric threw rocks at the cars circling around us on the cloverleaf. He hit a train waiting in the station and bragged about the time he hit a conductor in the eye.

"When I came back to visit after Rural Unit, Eric was floating cigarette butts down the gutter. He was really glad to see me. Mrs. Brown was glad to see me too.

"The South End is no longer a foreign place. I have friends here now, the people I worked with, and the Browns."

(c) "Great. I loved it here. Mrs. D. made me feel so confortable at once and the big family (nine) made it a lot easier too... I met some really beautiful people whom I have seen since and will continue seeing."

2. Would you recommend making housing arrangements the same way another year?

   If not, how would you suggest they be handled?

   All the students recommended doing housing placements exactly as we did this year, except one who thought they should live in co-ed unchaperoned apartments.

3. Comment on the role of the apartment.

   The apartment was a more complicated arrangement. Five of the seven boys who lived there were satisfied with it. They wanted the independence and the opportunity to solve problems without adult interference. Two of the boys commented on the confusion and lack of consideration and felt harassed by this.

   "...in the apartment, it was an experience — we had to cope with all of the typical urban problems, food, rip-offs, complaining tenants

below us, leaky roofs. And often typically human ones, too. i.e. -- 'shut up', 'turn that radio off', 'wake up', 'go to sleep', 'whose food is that?', and the eternal problem of somebody owing someone else money. But it was a really good experience and I'm glad I was there. We solved most of our problems all right."

For those not living in the apartment, it became a gathering place. The number of visitors led to tensions between the apartment dwellers who resented constant interruptions and some of the others who felt they had done more work for Low-Cost.

All students felt that a gathering place was needed and suggested that another year we find one that was available to everyone.

D. General Comments

1. Comment on the role of the Lincoln-Sudbury staff. Were they threatening or helpful or interfering or supportive or what?

answered below in #2

2. Any recommendations for how role of Lincoln-Sudbury staff should be changed?

Commenting on staffing most of the students said that although their contact with the teachers was minimal, they wanted it that way and felt that they knew the staff was available if needed. Almost no one recommended changing staffing, but those who did suggested more frequent contact with the staff would be beneficial. The students said constantly, however, that they liked the feeling of being on their own.

(a) "It's also good to know that there is someone there if you need them."

(b) "Didn't really use them. They got me my job. But I pretty much did the rest of the unit myself. They were encouraging about the show, though."

(c) "They never bothered me and I never needed them."

(d) "They were a good backstop. You had someone to help you if necessary, but a continual dictator they weren't."

3. Did you feel you had enough contact with each other?

   Twenty-one students felt they had sufficient contact with each other, particularly those living in the city with access to the apartment. Two felt they had too much and tended to rely too heavily on each other. Those who did the Urban unit the second time and/or those who could not get to the apartment felt fairly isolated.

4. Was coming home on weekends a good idea, or did it break continuity of the urban experience?

   Twenty-two students felt that coming home on weekends destroyed the continuity of the urban experience. However, fourteen felt that they needed this break from the stresses of the city.

5. Did you have enough free time? too much? not enough?

   Yes - twenty-one; no - five

6. Are you satisfied with the way you used your free time?

   Yes - twenty-two; no - six

7. Do you feel students should be permitted to hold money-making jobs another year?

   Yes - twenty-five; no - four

III. Employer Evaluations - Urban

Twenty-nine employers completed and returned forms to us, in which they answered the following questions:

1. What are the first words which come to mind to describe the student's attitude?

   The Alternate Semester students seem to have left an overwhelmingly favorable impression. The words used most often to describe them were conscientious, cooperative, eager, interested, creative, efficient, reliable, enthusiastic, etc.

2. Do you feel the student was sincerely involved in his work with you, or had joined the Alternate Semester program primarily to get out of school?

   Sincerely involved - twenty-six

   Negative - two

3. Would you comment briefly on the student's performance? We are particularly interested in the degree of responsibility, initiative, self-reliance and cooperation that the student showed; any specific examples of ways he/she impressed or disappointed you would be particularly helpful.

   Twenty-five employers gave a positive report of the student's performance.
   There was one mixed report.
   There were no negative reports.

4. Did you notice any changes in the student during the five weeks?

   Twenty-two said they noticed changes.
   Most of these were in the student's confidence and competence in handling the job.

   Four said they noticed no changes.

   One employer said that student became less interested and involved in his work.

5. Could you cite any ways in which you feel you benefited by having the student work with you?

   Yes - twenty-five

   No - four

   (a) "It made me more respectful of teenage potentialities."

   (b) "I learned what people Miss D's age and economic/social background are thinking about many of the topics of importance today. I also learned just how big the difference in degrees of sophistication, realism and self-sufficiency is between urban and rural-suburban people of that age bracket."

   (c) "I enjoyed them as people and feel certain that the successful passage of the 'indeterminate sentence bill' was a result of their leg work."

6. Are there any ways in which having him/her was a problem?

   No - twenty-three

   Yes - five

(a) "The problem was mine not theirs...I was not able to spend enough time with them." (four)

(b) "He often came late and/or left early, giving me very little notice." (one)

7. Was the student mature enough for the job you gave him?

Yes - twenty-four

Uncertain - one

8. Could a younger student (a sophomore, age 14 or 15) have handled the same job?

Yes - four

No - fifteen

Maybe - nine

9. Would some preparation for the job have been helpful? If so, what kind?

Sixteen suggested a greater knowledge of the field of work ahead of time.

Eight said no preparation would be particularly helpful.

10. What is your reaction to the length of time (5 weeks) and number of hours he/she worked for you? Are there any changes in the time scheme that you would suggest?

Thirteen felt the five-week period should be extended.

Nine thought the five weeks was sufficient.

Two thought the ten-week period the particular student worked for them was an adequate length of time.

There were no specific comments on the number of hours per day.

11. Did the fact that the student came from a suburban environment have any apparent effect upon his experience or upon the people with whom he/she worked?

No - twenty-one

Yes - four

12. Would you consider taking a student another year? If not, why not?

    Yes - twenty-three

    Yes, but for longer period - one

    Yes, but for one week only - one

13. Can you suggest any other people or agencies who might be interested in taking a student?

    Many did offer suggestions.

14. Was supervision by the Lincoln-Sudbury staff adequate?

    Five - yes

    Thirteen - greater contact

    Two - supervision is unnecessary

    Those who wanted more supervision by the Lincoln-Sudbury staff usually said they wanted a clearer idea of how Lincoln-Sudbury saw the role of the employer.

15. Do you have any suggestions as to how the program could be improved another year?

    Other than increased staffing there were none.

IV. Lincoln-Sudbury Staff Evaluation

The five week period spent in the city was an individual rather that a group experience; the problems the students faced most often had to be solved alone. For students and staff alike it was the environment we least understood. We placed students in jobs and with families hoping that they would explain the city to them, because we ourselves were not certain how it functioned. As a result, for all of us, but particularly for the students, it was complicated and confusing.

The staff had two worries concerning the students' employment. One was that not all the students were particularly interested in their jobs. The other was that they did not always have sufficient supervision either from us or from their employers. We do feel, however, that the students handled their jobs with admirable independence and maturity and gained valuable insights in their work.

Another year we recommend that the students assume greater responsibility for finding their own job placements, and that the staff spend more time supervising the students and working

with the employers.

Having the students live with families was one of the most successful aspects of the program. Through the families they experienced different life-styles and formed many warm relationships. Although the staff felt some uneasiness about asking less privileged families to host wealthier suburbanites, both the students and families seemed to be genuinely happy with the arrangement.

The most difficult housing situation from the staff's point of view was the apartment. It turned out to be impossible to supervise adequately, and although most students who lived there enjoyed it, the potential risks were great. Another problem with the apartment was that it was given to us rent-free in return for the work the students were doing for Low-Cost Housing. Of the seven boys living there, only two did a significant amount of work. The other five did very little and in two cases none at all.

The situation at Low-Cost Housing was also problematical for the entire group. Many complained that they were given menial work when they had hoped to learn something substantial about carpentry. This endeavor was also doomed to failure because it provided the only consistent opportunity for students to get together and they tended to socialize rather than work. Both our staff and Low-Cost agree that there should be greater supervision if the project is done again.

It is evident from reading the students' evaluations of the urban unit that some of the objectives were fulfilled better than others. The students met many different people and found their new friendships tremendously rewarding. They learned they could live in the city and some found areas of interest they would like to pursue.

It is not clear, however, that they have a complete, organized understanding of the city and the way it functions. Rather they seem to have undergone a barrage of varied experiences which have made them more aware of only some aspects of urban living. Next year a longer orientation period should enable them to structure and comprehend their urban unit more completely.

V. Rural Unit

"The same cows always kick."

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I. Introduction

The rural unit, more than any of the others was an individual endeavor. Unlike the city, where students still had some obligations to the group and frequent contact with each other, in the Rural Unit, students were dispersed and, in many cases, totally cut off from other members of the group. The intent was for each individual to deal with an unfamiliar situation alone.

In preparation for an experience which placed major responsibility on the student and rural employer, the Lincoln-Sudbury staff made every effort to communicate with the employer about the nature of our program and to aid the student in selecting the best placement. All the students, except five who were in remote sites (Maine and Nova Scotia) were visited at least once during the unit by one of the Lincoln-Sudbury staff.

Twenty-nine students did their rural unit following their urban (April 24 - May 26); three did it first (March 13 - April 14); one did it for the full ten weeks.

The placements were varied. Twelve worked on different kinds of farms (dairy, horse, maple sugar, organic food) from Connecticut to Nova Scotia; five were involved in an historical restoration project in a small New Hampshire mill town; four were teacher aides in one room school houses; four were hut boys for the Appalachian Mountain Club; two did volunteer labor for families on a small island in Maine; two worked in a fish hatchery; one was a carpenter's apprentice; one worked for a lobsterman, one for the Vermont Forestry Service, and another for a veterinarian. (For more detailed list see Appendix B).

II. Student Evaluations

For their rural evaluation we asked the students to discuss this experience in any way that seemed important to them, suggesting that we were particularly interested in descriptions of their jobs, comments on their relationships with rural people, significant impressions, and a comparison with the urban unit.

The students speak of their rural unit with varying degrees of enthusiasm, but all the evaluations are positive. They comment most frequently on how much they appreciated the amount of responsibility they were given and how warmly they were received.

The only problems were an occasional battle with loneliness and some confusion over roles, particularly for girls doing manual labor. But both these difficulties were anticipated and

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seen by students and staff as a positive part of the challenge.

A. Rural Jobs

A very striking thing about the rural jobs is that most involved primarily physical labor. (Even in the teaching placements, two of the students helped run a week long outdoor education program and another helped construct a model Indian village). All responded very well to this. Many describe their work as hard but energizing and stress the satisfaction of tangible results.

About farms:

1. "My reaction to the unit was one of great satisfaction. I wish I could do it again. Fourteen hours of good clean work a day was something I really loved."

2. "We worked at least eleven hours a day except on Sunday when we only worked five. I admire these people in their determination and spirit in their work.

   One of the things that made this unit meaningful to me was the way all the work so directly tied in with the reward..."

3. "Farming is so fine because its constant life goes on and the cows are always milked and you always start at the same end of the barn and the same ones always kick. There's an order that's conforting and it gets familiar. When the world seems to be going crazy -- there's order, and I was happy -- being myself -- meeting people fresh and new without preformed opinions and I could be me."

4. "The fact that I was a girl cut off a lot of the farming horizon -- these strong more traditional roles caught me by surprise. At first I was anxious to learn everything I could about the functions and day to day workings of the dairy. For instance I helped in the barn as much as possible, went on hog shipping trips and even split some wood! I soon realized though (with a certain amount of teasing) that if I were to explore the rural society, that was not the best approach and as the weeks wore on, I saw that these roles were the most logical and I could understand their evolution."

About teaching:

"My job in the River Road School was fantastic.

I loved teaching there. Mrs. C., the teacher I worked with, gave me complete responsibility for fourth and sixth grade science, fifth grade reading and one fourth grade girl's reading."

About Historic Restoration:

1. "I loved working in Harrisville...We weren't helping someone finish something. We were doing something ourselves."

2. "I derived more from the country unit because I was given independence."

About Appalachain Mountain Club:

"A.M.C. cared about me personally and was not so worried about how much they could get out of me. As a result, I could work without worrying about whether the man in charge was happy with my work and work better because I didn't have to think about what the hierarchy felt that I was doing."

About Veterinarian:

"The things I learned were just incredible and I was given a lot of responsibility... I did minor surgery such as quill removals, I took care of animals, watched their progress, I went out on farm calls...I learned and did all the lab tests...I assisted in and learned the standard procedure for a wide assortment of operations."

About Matinicus Island, Maine:

"At first the islanders were suspicious of our motives in 'working for free'; but as we made a good impression on our first employers (and, I think, our hosts) and as many of the islanders are lonely for company, soon we were besieged by perspective employers."

B. Relationships with Rural People:

In describing their relationships with rural people, some mention an initial awkwardness and mutual skepticism, but by the end of the five weeks most felt respected, warmly welcomed, and comfortably at home.

1. "We were at first treated as boarders with conversational stand offishness accorded to our rank. Later...we became part of the family."

2. "As time went on I became R.'s shadow and we went to get cattle or help other farmers and generally dined together. He was receptive and clearly explained ideas and problems to me. I felt very comfortable with him. We spent a great deal of time explaining ourselves to each other...We rarely faced hard times between us and once he asked me in a rather timid way to come back if I could."

3. "One of the good things was that they trusted me."

4. "N. and I began relating to each other on a polite level, but in silent, doubting conjecture about each other. The first week was rather discouraging for both of us because we hadn't answered to each other the questions of our objectives, roles and expectations. During the second week we began to communicate on working grounds getting at what was bothering us and with each successive talk we opened up more. N. was stubborn and hard to please, but I felt closer to her than anyone I met."

5. "B. was really cool. I enjoyed working with her. She and I would talk over teaching and our experiences with the kids. She gave me a couple of books to read. They were very good - it was cool because I saw a lot of her concepts in discipline and teaching in the books she gave me."

6. "D. and A., with the rest of their family, shared so much with us that it was very uprooting to leave. This whole way of life, by the end of five weeks, seemed totally natural and comfortable."

7. "We liked one family tremendously. We got to know their roots and so understood them better, but I'm glad I'm not them."

C. Significant Impressions

In relating their most significant impressions of the unit the students responded on a very personal level, reacting much more to the total experience and total environment than just to their particular jobs. They talked about their feelings of joy, of loneliness, and of personal growth. In many cases they felt the experience as part of a quest for a personal life style.

1. "It was the first time I'd been dependent on myself to get meals and take care of all my belongings. Most important thing was dependency on myself."

2. "I truly led a balanced life, which I constructed for myself, and benefited from the experience."

3. "I learned much about myself and teaching and how the two go together."

4. "I'd like to live in a rural environment someday -- but not yet...it's too peaceful for me now...I was quite lonely at times -- but that was good because I had time to sort things in my mind and take in the environment."

5. "When I arrived, I was almost immediately hit with the feeling of immobility, insecurity and aloneness."

6. "Another thing that made the rural unit good was that I was in the hills which I loved."

7. "I learned so much and the experience was so good and fulfilling for me, because I followed my interests. And this is (maybe, quite possibly) what I'd be doing later on in life. To own my own farm and grow my own food, and to live with the land, not on it."

D. Comparison with Urban Unit

Not all the students attempted a comparison between their urban and rural units. Many felt the experiences were so different and so complex that they did not yet have enough distance to see a relationship clearly, if in fact one existed. In general, more students were sympathetic to the rural way of life. They found it more calming, less complicated, and more enjoyable than the city living. They liked the totality of their involvement (the fact that they did not as a rule come home for weekends). They comment frequently on the stability and wholeness of the rural environment. But they weigh with uncertainty the anonymity of the city against the close, but gossipy quality of the small town.

It must be remembered that these evaluations were written directly after the Rural Unit. The rural experiences are still very alive, the urban ones part of the past -- perhaps not the best time to attempt a comparison.

1. "It was much better than urban because it was twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for five weeks."

2. "This unit was by far superior to the urban unit because I enjoyed living in a quiet, less complex environment."

3. "The rural unit was a good contrast to the office-type job I had in the city. I really loved them both. In twelve years of school I didn't learn as much about life, people and being very happy as I did on my urban and rural."

4. "The city becomes so incomprehensible to me and one of the things which disperses its meaning so is commuters. The farm work was so much more physical but there was a direct satisfaction from it and one's mind clears on it."

5. "My life in Boston had no sense of continuity or stability, and Matinicus is the essence of both."

6. "I learned a lot of self control, and how to relax and lot more on both these units. I derived much more satisfaction from the country unit because I was given independence."

7. "The nicest aspect of the rural unit was that we had time to concentrate on what we were doing. The time I spent in Boston was full of commuting, three different ways of life (my own house on weekends, the people I lived with and those I worked for) -- Perhaps I did feel more useful in that I could help my employer with research -- but the overall experience wasn't as immersing."

8. "To, all of a sudden, be put under gossip's jurisdiction and be judged is quite an intense thing when one has never experienced it before."

9. "They have each other to turn to, and all of more than one hundred people pulling for one with every bit of themselves is an unheard of mainland phenomenon."

10. "On all our jobs, but one, we served a double purpose as workers and as completely neutral-transient-people for the wives to talk to. Mostly airing complaints about the iniquities in their neighbors."

III. Employer Evaluations

Lincoln-Sudbury sent questionnaires to all rural employers. We received twenty-five replies. One of these was distinctly negative, four were mixed, and twenty were very enthusiastic. The one negative evaluation focuses on the boy's poor attitude and performance and came as no surprise to the Lincoln-Sudbury staff. Of the four employers whose evaluations were mixed, three were perfectly happy with the student's work, but felt the students were not interested in what they were doing; one indicated some conflicts in personality and life style.

All the others were positive. On the whole the employers found these students to be responsible, energetic, involved, and mature. Only one expressed any reservation about taking a student another year and this because the girl had worked out so well they feared disappointment next time. People were mostly approving of the program, feeling the supervision was adequate, the five week time span good. The only three recommendations for improvement were that there be more communication with Lincoln-Sudbury before the unit begins to clarify mutual expectations (from three people), that Lincoln-Sudbury be more sure of the students' interests before placing them (one person), and that other time blocks be a possibility (two people).

The following is a copy of a sample questionnaire with a more detailed summary of answers:

1. What are the first words which come to mind to describe the student's attitude?

   Positive - (Twenty)
   Mixed - (Four)
   Negative - (One)

2. Do you feel the student was sincerely involved in his work with you, or had joined the Alternate Semester program primarily to get out of school?

   Positive - (Twenty-three)
   Some qualification - (Two)

3. Would you comment briefly on the student's performance? We are particularly interested in the degree of responsibility, initiative, self-reliance and cooperation that the student showed: any specific examples of ways he/she impressed or disappointed you would be particularly helpful.

Positive - (Twenty-two)

a. "G. performed very well, He was responsible and reliable. I would have liked to have him on my permanent crew."

b. "D. did not shirk any of his work associations with the men. He participated in many laborious work projects and was a great help in getting the jobs done."

c. "He had full responsibility of (Grade 6 - two pupils) geometry for three weeks. He covered the whole unit, kept their interest high and even involved some children of the other grades. He planned the work and got the materials ready... He cooperated with everything I suggested throughout the unit... He had the children's friendship and respect."

Mixed (two)

a. "You could count on her when you asked her to do something, but everything rather slow."

b. "Very cooperative, not much initiative, not very interested in farm operations, particularly the cows. Did seem interested in the machinery, especially the truck."

Negative (one)

a. "Because of his poor attitude his performance was poor. I witnessed no sign of initiative. He cooperated only because he had to. His self-reliance was poor. He had the intelligence to perform well, but he didn't."

4. Did you notice any changes in the student during the five weeks?

Yes - (seventeen) - Most frequent comments were that students became more open, more self-confident, showed increased initiative and matured.

No - (eight)

5. Could you cite any ways in which you feel you benfited by having the student work with you?

Did benefit - (twenty-three)

a. "Besides being a great help working, I personally gained from her sensitivity."

b. "The most important was freeing me to pay attention to individual children who sometimes got lost in the shuffle."

c. "The basic physical improvement of two buildings and their grounds, thereby initiating a rehabilitation and preservation project. The improved rooms are being used today as offices, teaching space and a kitchen. Also, very good effect the kids had on relations between Historic Harrisville and the town. People in the town were able to respond and relate to the kids' work and their openness. The kids also had a very positive effect on the morale of the people who had been working in the Historic Harrisville project."

No reply - (two)

6. Are there any ways in which having him/her was a problem?

Not problems - (twenty-one)
No with qualifications - (three)
Yes - (one) criticism of personal habits

7. Was the student mature enough for the job you gave him?

Yes - (twenty-five)

8. Could a younger student (a sophomore, age 14 or 15) have handled the same job?

Yes - (one)
Maybe - depending on student (ten)
No - (fourteen)

9. Would some preparation for the job have been helpful? If so, what kind?

Yes - (six)
No - (nineteen)

10. What is your reaction to the length of time (five weeks) and number of hours he/she worked for you? Are there any changes in the time scheme that you would suggest?

Satisfied with five weeks - (sixteen)
Five weeks okay, but would prefer longer - (nine)

11. Did the fact that the student came from a suburban environment have any apparent effect upon his experience or upon the people with whom he/she worked?

Yes - (one)
No - (twenty-four)

12. Would you consider taking a student another year? If not, why not?

    Yes - (twenty-four)
    Maybe - (one)

13. Can you suggest any other people or agencies who might be interested in taking a student?

    Suggestions - (ten)
    No suggestions - (fifteen)

14. Was supervision by the Lincoln-Sudbury staff adequate? If not, what would you suggest?

    Yes - (nineteen)
    Should be a little closer- (one)
    Not aware of any, but didn't feel it was necessary - (five)

    Note: This reflects evaluations from two placements, both of which were visited by Lincoln-Sudbury staff - the problem seems to be that the person we talked to did not communicate with the person writing the evaluation.

15. Do you have any suggestions as to how the program could be improved another year?

    Yes - (six)

    a. "Coordination from our end needs help."

    b. "Perhaps more information on what program should accomplish."

    c. "More contact before the start of the program."

    No - (nine)
    No reply - (ten)

16. If the student also lived with you during this five week period would you comment on his/her conduct in your home. We are particularly interested in how well the student adapted to an unfamiliar situation and the degree to which he/she met your expectations of behavior.

    Positive - (twelve)
    Negative - (one)
    No answer - (twelve)

17. Do you feel that more information on the student's background and family situation would have been helpful?

Yes - (three)
Good idea, but not necessary - (two)
Received adequate information - (one)
Only if there is a problem - (one)
No - (fifteen)
No answer - (three)

18. Any additional comments:

Organic food farm:

"Your program shows quite unusual sensitivity to students' needs. The times certainly are changing, and I'm not sure where education is going or where it should go, but it seems you are doing your best. Thank you. We all benefit from the sincere education of people, even if it's only a few."

Teachers - One room school houses:

"It would be nice to have a set of objectives down on paper before the program begins, and to have some way to evaluate our joint progress other than at the end of the month's experience!"

"Knowing ahead of time that H. was good in math and science, had a hobby of photography and had done some tutoring of reading was a big help to me. I planned special units to do for that month. I hope H. has benefited from the experience. I'm sure the children and I have. I enjoyed H. as a student and a friend."

Historic Harrisville:

"Only to reinforce our very positive response to the program and our willingness to participate another year. One of the striking things is how responsive Lincoln-Sudbury was to the Harrisville situation and how willing to take risks."

No comments - (seventeen)

IV. <u>Staff Evaluation</u>

The rural unit was a collection of individual experiences, a time for students to try themselves alone, a time for reflection. We feel good about this unit. We find that the change of pace was healthy, that the total involvement which this unit required gave people a chance to test their Outward Bound self-reliance. We are proud of the initiative, strength and maturity the students apparently showed.

We feel some uneasiness about the undefined quality of this unit. The objectives -- to become immersed in a new life style, to become sensitive to the needs of rural America -- are vague. Yet we are leery of overemphasizing objectives at the risk of stifling experience.

There are two ways, however, in which we feel this unit could take a clearer direction without jeopardizing spontaneity. One would be to have students play a larger role in finding their placements. Another would be for the staff to supply employers with more specific information about the Alternate Semester Program.

VI. River/Building Unit

"We built it all ourselves"

River/Building Unit

I. Introduction

The River/Building Unit belonged entirely to the students. They planned it; they executed it. The staff interfered as little as possible. It was like an Outward Bound final expedition in its demands upon individual initiative and group responsibility. The specific project, as defined by the students, was to build a cabin on some private property in Grafton, Vermont for use by the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional High Nimbus (Outward Bound type) program. Working within a $200.00 budget the students constructed a 16' x 16' two story, dormered building, using the forest and an old barn as major sources of materials.

Since not everyone could work on the building at once there were two three day canoe trips on the Connecticut River. The students also created other projects at the site (like building dams in the brook and picking up trash and assumed full responsibility for all the details of camp life).

II. Student Evaluations

Student reactions to this unit were once again mostly positive. The most consistent praise was for the building, which when finished was much more beautiful and substantial than anyone had anticipated. The students were excited, astonished, proud.

But some of the students were more involved in this building than others. A few did almost no carpentry at all, either because they had no interest or because they felt threatened by the hard core building crew, and these students tended to have the most serious reservations about the unit.

Reactions to the group experience were quite mixed. Most students seemed relieved to be back with their friends. Many felt a renewed spirit of group unity and cooperation. Others, however, felt divisions and cliques remained and that not enough people shared in the camp chores. Also, a number of students were disturbed because one boy chose not to come at all and another came and went at will.

1. "Now I'm there, in this incredible building in Grafton. We built it all ourselves with no carpenter watching over us. For only $200 we built a building worth at least $4,000.
   "I was a part of all of it. I knew why each piece was put where and how. I sure know how to build a house. Before this I'd never done

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any carpentry. I never thought I could. It's all so incredible. The house is fantastic and we built it all ourselves."

2. "When it got to the River/Building Unit, I saw people being clearly motivated by true interest and wish for purposeful accomplishment rather than routine, which is the chief motivation 99% of the time in school."

3. "We've been building a building - and I helped build it. Kind of like I'm part of Alternate Semester and I helped build this group. But sometimes I feel like I really blew something. It's not the program though--it's something about this group of people that makes me feel this way."

4. "Our group drew closer together in Grafton. This was not because of the building; it was just a need to explore people further. The building seemed to be a somewhat separate problem which we beautifully overcame."

5. "The River/Building Unit was a different experience. I didn't like it much but I don't know why; maybe because of bugs and not enough structure. I felt out of place at the building and started to dislike the kitchen. If the main purpose was to bring us back together, it failed for me. The unit showed fantastic creativity. I should have tried to work on the building more and I might have found it more rewarding."

6. "More important to me though is the way relationships developed. I finally had the time and energy to really reach for people in the group. During Outward Bound, with the structure of watches and syncopated expeditions, we were limited to twelve or so. And during other units, it was each to their own. I loved concentrating on people when I really didn't want to be anywhere else."

7. "The only reservation I have about these three weeks is a matter of cliques. It is clear to a number of people that there are others who they have never really had a chance to be with due to their preoccupation with their own old group of friends. Many of these groups haven't changed substantially since their L.S.R.H.S. days...
"I find the students in this program,

especially male, incredibly unsophisticated. I really enjoy it - it's a state of mind that I missed out on - but on the other hand it makes me feel a little alien. The people here talk and act on a different level than I do...I habitually dive smack into the middle of in-depth conversations (on any subject - what have you) and enjoy academic arguments just because they stimulate my mind. I think that kind of talk frightens these people, or bores them, but at any rate it's one method of communication that I sorely miss. As, perhaps, part and parcel of this unsophistication (or even a-sophistication) is a general desire not to talk too openly to any but a chosen few. As part of the way these people are, it doesn't bother me, but as a way of life it does, strongly."

III. Staff Evaluation

There are ways in which the staff was very pleased with the final unit. We felt that to a large degree it was a very successful, autonomous group effort, requiring little staff supervision or support. At the building the students worked energetically and cooperatively, solving all the major construction problems themselves. Enthusiasm reached such a peak in the final week that hammers could be heard fifteen hours a day. Also, there was a wonderful tone to the group in these final weeks -- warm, relaxed, spontaneous, happy.

There are a couple of things though which disappointed us. First was the recurring unwillingness for anyone to assume real leadership. Although this never seemed to bother the students and they did function amazingly well without it, it did bother the staff. It meant that on occasion we had to step in to get things moving. It also meant that the kitchen was a mess and the essential chores were performed repeatedly by the same responsible few.

Second was the question of group unity. We felt some rather strong divisions. Sometimes these divisions worked positively, good honest controversy leading to better mutual understanding, but equally often they led to alienation.

The staff had begun this unit with severe doubts, fearing an anticlimactic end to Alternate Semester. We now realize, however, that it was extremely important for the students to get together again. This group endeavor balanced the more individual experiences of the urban and rural units.

It gave the students a chance to share, reflect and work with one another. And by the rather remarkable spirit they created, they accomplished far more than anyone believed was possible.

VII. Parents' Evaluation

Parents' Evaluation

Questionnaires were sent to all the parents. Eighteen replies were received. Below is a copy of the questionnaire with summary answers.

I. Can you cite any specific ways in which you feel Alternate Semester was either valuable or not valuable for your son or daughter? We are particularly interested in any changes you see in attitude and behavior.

Most parents responded positively to this question; some expressed reservations. Below are some examples:

1. "The largeness of spirit with which our daughter returned to her family from Maine was truly encompassing and we all knew we loved each other very much. S. at age 17 was already well pointed toward maturity. But the Alternate Semester Program provided grounds in and on which she was able to both deepen and broaden her development."

2. "J. has become much more communicative since his Alternate Semester association. He seems not to be so dogmatic and is willing to at least listen to the other side of the issue. We hope he will continue on to college, but his ideas are now that all this book knowledge is useless - at least four years of it. I feel this idea blossomed in Alternate Semester."

3. "...the program may very well have come along in the nick of time for him; unfortunately next year may well be a letdown. Alternate Semester has strengthened his feelings of independence and self-awareness. It has not helped his inability to finish projects he starts."

4. "We noticed an increased independence and we think that is good. He has attained greater social awareness to the point where we can hardly stand it, but we know his ideals are worthy."

5. "Very valuable. His behavior is much more self-assured and open - shows a bit more consideration for others (even his family!) and seems better able to set a task, then proceed and do it. Through the urban experience B. has found a field he enjoys and he can't wait for fall to study more. Wants to learn to read faster.... all this is new."

6. "It's too early to evaluate any changes. I'll be glad to answer this question several months after school starts."

7. "It was valuable in developing a large degree of independence, firmness or decisiveness, confidence in her

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ability to cope with circumstances as they arose, consideration for her family, kindness to others. She became a member of a group which appears to have some strong bonds."

8. "For the first time D. had the security of being, without any compromise, a valued member of a group other than her family. We feel the group was very supportive of its members. This experience is something very valuable, very hard to get, for an independent, spirited individual."

9. "L. thought that the Outward Bound Unit was the most challenging thing she had ever done. She has learned to relate to different kinds of people, different races and intellectual levels which she hadn't been able to do before. She has learned to make her own decisions and become independent -- excellent preparation for college."

One parent tells of her son returning to a summer job where the boy had been warned the previous summer about his attitude, work habits and appearance and quotes the employer as saying:

"Tell me about that school in your town - it must be quite a place. I've never seen a kid mature as much in a year as D. has."

II. Did you feel the parents were sufficiently involved in the program? If not, how would you have liked to have been more involved?

Most parents felt their involvement was sufficient, especially since one purpose of Alternate Semester was to allow students to devise an education program on their own.

Several parents requested more meetings in which the students described their experiences.

III. Are there any aspects of the program which you felt were particularly strong or weak?

Comments on strength:

Many parents echoed their children's enthusiasm for the Outward Bound Unit. They also felt positively about the closeness of the group, the staff leadership, and the student role in planning.

Comments on weaknesses:

Like the students, the parents felt the Environmental Issues Unit was the least successful and suggested it be changed another year.

Several parents expressed concern over excessive analysis of personal feelings by the students. This comment was surprising to the staff since we never felt this was taking place, and were not aware of any students feeling pressured in this manner.

A few felt there was not enough structure to the program and raised questions about the amount of supervision in the Urban and Rural Units.

IV. Are there any changes you would recommend?

Specific recommendations:

More required written work
A clearer definition of student goals
Make the program easier for non-academic students
More detailed information for parents well in advance of each unit
End the program before graduation

V. Do you feel Alternate Semester should be continued another year?

Yes - (sixteen)
No opinion yet - (one)
Advisors should decide - (one)

Several suggested that the program should be for seniors only because the readjustment to the high school for the juniors might prove too difficult.

The staff was encouraged by the generally positive response of the parents and appreciated their suggestions. We recognize that the confidence the parents showed in their children, the staff, and the program were essential to the success of Alternate Semester.

VIII. Conclusion

"I have come closer to an acceptable way

of being me."

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Conclusion

I. Student Evaluations

What above all did Alternate Semester mean to these students? Of course each experience was highly personal. Students joined this program for very different reasons, and the benefits they derived are equally individual. This is why we have included large portions of the most articulate evaluations and encourage you to look to these for the answer. But if there is one consistent theme that runs throughout these evaluations it is that the majority of these students acquired a more positive, more self-confident image of themselves. They claim to have a fuller picture of who they are, a better sense of their potential, and a more realistic idea of the possible. They stress two things in particular about the program which they feel were good: one, that it was experience, activity oriented, that they could do "real work" and take actual responsibility for shaping their own education, and two, that they had an arena for exploring and nurturing relationships, for coming to trust and care for other people. They had many motives for joining Alternate Semester. Some were bored; some were seeking escape from school or home; some were restless and wanted new perspectives; all wanted more voice in their own education. Very striking is how many evaluations contain a balanced view of this experience. Some may have gone into it expecting immediate answers, but they emerge with the realization that answers are not so easy to find. They express some apprehension about where they go from here, but they seem much more ready to live with uncertainty. Whatever the disappointments, they appear able to accept them. There is no question that they were deeply affected and that most left this program with more courage to face the world and themselves.

1. "At first I thought I was changing a lot through this. But now I think it wasn't me that changed, but my self-image...
   "Alternate Semester was a little taste of many lives; something new, something different every month; new challenges, new games. I had school down pat; how to play up to teachers, how to get good grades for shitty work, how to skip classes, how to while away the free time 'till the bus came to save you. How much can you learn when you play the same games every day for 3½ years? I didn't want that, I wanted escape from all that. Alternate Semester gave it to me...
   "...another important part of Alternate Semester was people. The forty of us being the main characters, I know lots of people are disappointed because they feel we are not much of a group, but I personally have never felt so close to a large group of people...

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"A lot of people in Alternate Semester refuse to look upon this experience as an escape. 'It's an alternative.' 'It's a valid educational experience.' Maybe it is. Maybe it isn't. I haven't learned the same things I would have learned at school. I've lived a lot more than I would have otherwise, and I think living is more valuable than learning when learning is the high school way. For me Alternate Semester was an escape; an escape from something that I felt was hurting me."

2. "The merits of this program are that it's such a doing program - that they could - that we could make it work, make it a success. The achievements were there to see - the goals simple many times, the emphasis not on failure. That's why it's the best educational thing to come out of our school this year. That's why it could work - because you had a backlog of successes behind you to urge you on...
"...I've enjoyed Alternate Semester. I needed it. I'm confident now that I'm a likeable person, that I can do what I want to do - that I make people happy. What remains to be seen is next year, if this will stay with me, or if my achievements were too easily gotten, and I sink back to quiet apathy and worthlessness."

3. "If I can let go, even a little of my idea of who I am, I have a chance to discover more of what I actually experience at this moment."

4. "Alternate Semester has been living, good times and hard times, being alone and being with other people, being with other Alternate Semester students in a close, beautiful way and being with people I would never have met without Alternate Semester. It has been a widening of my world, a better look into the world of myself. I have grown on Alternate Semester. I have come closer to an acceptable way of being me. Alternate Semester has been the most wonderful thing that could have happened to me."

5. "The thought which I feel has affected me the most from my varying life styles is that if you're going to attempt to do anything you might as well get 'into it.' Most of my life I had just sat around and waited for things to excite me (the getting stoned a lot syndrome); what a bland self, life, love stifling way to live. If you try and involve yourself in most things you

do you receive enjoyment, satisfaction, and a better job on whatever done. This is not to say it is possible to absorb yourself in all that you do. But you can direct yourself towards activities where you feel at an optimum."

6. "These last five months have brought about a lot of changes in the way I think, the way I work, the way I live and the way I look at things. Before Alternate Semester I was slowly slipping into a state of stagnation. My rate of growth and learning were slowly decreasing, and my environment (home and school) was not exactly inspiring or motivating me. So when the opportunity of Alternate Semester appeared I made the decision to take my life and do something worthwhile with it. At the time I did not realize to such an extent the decision would change my life. Now instead of looking to others for inspiration and motivation I find them inside of myself. I have found a new zest for life--a new eagerness to get out and do things, to push myself to do all the things I have wanted to do and have known I should do but never have actually brought myself to do. I have learned how to be happy, how to keep myself happy from inside, so that I may be happy anywhere, anytime, with anyone. I learned about being hurt, and that 'everything that doesn't kill you outright makes you stronger.' I learned not to look to other people for my strength but to find it inside me. I learned that all <u>real</u> strength, confidence, satisfaction, security, etc. must be found, come from inside oneself; if not it is of no real use, only temporary."

7. "I can't say that Alternate Semester appealed to me in the form of an escape, because it is only now that I realize how valuable it was for me to leave school. Granted I was trying to get an education, making the best of my courses, teacher relationships and fairly happily following the system. And because my good family situation was always behind me, not to mention many different friends, my mind was busily preoccupied from my real state of affairs. I found myself blindly submerging in the rut of passive routines, working on things simply to finish them and get on to the next.
"So time flew and over last summer it bred an itch for experience, to get out of the state, town, schools and home which I had depended on for sixteen and one half years. I became more

restless, seeing that perhaps the best years of my life were fast wasting away in a traditional preparation for the future, living one time for the next.
"I'm sure the fact that I have followed Alternate Semester since its introduction to Lincoln-Sudbury affected my decision to be in it this year; just getting wound up in something that you've spent a lot of time with and seeing it flow and come to life draws you in. And now that I think of it, it's impossible to conceive of not being part of Alternate Semester."

8. "I've learned many things in school, but it was irrelevant to my life or what I wanted to be learning. I wanted, and still do, to learn how to be happy; how to be more or less at peace with myself; how to care for others; how to live with other people; how to love and be loved; how to live and survive. Alternate Semester seemed to me to be a good way to start learning some of these things.
"Throughout the program I've gained some self-confidence and lost some of my fears."

9. "The most important, obvious and fantastic thing that Alternate Semester has given me is free will. The working knowledge that I can and ought to and dare to follow my own path - taking back roads, perhaps, rather than the expressway...
"Looking at my journal I can see that I have come a long way and that I know what's happening to myself more than I ever did. Having watched myself react to new situations that followed each other so quickly, I observed patterns of depression and other emotions, and can now control them more."

10. "I feel the satisfaction one feels when he has done something that he thought he could not do, not only in the River/Building unit in Grafton but also throughout the year in such things as understanding and straightening out your life and choosing the way you want to live. Alternate Semester has provided the chance for me to live out some of my fantasies which I ordinarily would not have had the opportunity to test out had I still been in school which suppresses these fantasies."

11. "I decided to do this program, not because I was terribly bored with what Lincoln-Sudbury had to offer, but because I was ready for new perspectives in looking at my life...
"...on this program I have been able to see my capabilities clearer and have seen where I need improvement. I enjoy being with people. I have

dealt with culture shocks from Maine to Boston to New Hampshire which has forced me to cling on to the awareness of who I am in this world and what I can give. I am forever glad that I've been able to live this past year the way I have...the way we all have together."

12. "I'm not sure if I went into Alternate Semester with the right attitude. If it was supposed to be group experiences, I didn't feel part of them. I entered and left Outward Bound as an individual."

13. "Summer is very near. I think it will start on Monday after the Richardson's party. I have had quite a few summers come my way but this is the first that I wish would not come...
"...I had produced a good deal of work and energy towards this program's creation. It was this initial work and interest that made me feel part of the group and committed. I was satisfied in being able to produce and having this work accepted. Even more intriguing was the fact that there was a direct goal involved whereas most of my other work was without direction."

14. "Last summer I spent six weeks in Grenada, West Indies. During that time, I developed a sense of balance in my life which I lost when I returned to the United States...when college and other prospects of the future entered my plans, I decided it could be important to take a year off and return to Grenada. I wanted to take time to explore the potential of my life and bring it into some sort of perspective. Then Alternate Semester grew on me. I found that I no longer need that year off, and I am enrolled at Bowdoin College next fall."

15. "Looking back, there weren't any specific major events that led to my being a part of Alternate Semester. I felt a general dissatisfaction with the way my life, more specifically my school life, was going. I had fallen into a greyness of attitude which kept me from becoming involved with anything, and it looked like the last half of my senior year would complete the pattern unless I could jerk myself out of it. I often find that the only way I can do something of consequence is to sneak up behind myself and push myself right into it. Otherwise, too much 'should I or shouldn't I' time is wasted.
"After I found myself part of Alternate Semester I still had doubts but no real fears. I guess I had proved something to myself by taking the initial step and from that came the strength to believe I could make it work out well. And looking back, I think it has worked out well."

16. "I really don't know where to begin. I can't really say whether I've reached my goals - that I had at the beginning of this program - whatever they were, I'm sure they've changed. I know this semester has been a fantastic experience; something I'm really glad I did. It seemed to have a purpose while it was happening; something I never felt in classes at school, or at least I never felt they had a really meaningful purpose. I know I've learned a lot - there are things I can do now that I could never do before; things I know now; things I've experienced. I've gained a lot of experience in simply living, which really isn't simple at all. I've gained a lot of self confidence. I've become more of a person, more me. I've gotten to know a lot of people. I guess if I did it all over again I might change one or two things, but not much. Everything was good in some way - something was learned from both good and bad. I've had battles with myself and I think I've come out on top - sometimes with other people's help - sometimes on my own - I'm on top and that's good to know. I think everyone has gained 'motivation' to some extent. People don't have to be told to do things so much anymore."

Conclusion

II. Staff Evaluation

We would like to begin with our reservations. The most glaring weakness in the Alternate Semester Program from the staff point of view was the limitation on our time. Because the Director was teaching a full class load in the fall when all the major planning had to be done and because funding remained uncertain until November 30, 1971, many of the final arrangements had to be made during the program. This consumed time that should have been devoted to supervision. We feel that another year we should work more closely with employers clarifying our mutual expectations, that students should assume a larger role in finding their own placements, and that in the urban unit, we should spend more time with the students at their jobs. The Alternate Semester Planning course in the fall, which assures time for staff and students should facilitate these changes.

Another area of dissatisfaction was the coordination with Boston's Copley Square High School. We had wanted from the beginning to make this a program of urban-suburban cooperation. If the intent was for the students to experience different environments, it made sense for the composition of the group to reflect these environments. But financial difficulties made it impossible for more than five Copley Square students to join the program, and these, because they had to make up missed work, could only take part in certain units. This obviously limited their integration into the group and in a way defeated a major purpose for including them. Nevertheless, the Outward Bound and rural experiences seemed to have had a significant effect on some of the Copley Square kids. For this reason, we believe that even their partial participation was a good thing. It also opened the door for an expanded, better coordinated program next year. Provided we get the needed funding (being sought from federal and foundation sources), there will be twenty-five (25) Copley Square students and forty-five (45) suburban) and they will begin working with the Lincoln-Sudbury students in the fall.

A matter which was somewhat unsettling to the staff was the ambiguity concerning their roles. A major intent of the program was to give both students and staff a chance to explore new roles, but as stated earlier, this was never really resolved. We were not clearly teachers, nor advisors, nor counselors, nor authority figures, nor parents, nor equals, yet were called upon at times to be all of these. Although this was confusing, and at times difficult, the struggle at least felt real. None of us could hide behind secure masks of expected behavior, and had to deal with issues that might never have been raised in a classroom. We feel this was good for all of us.

We also have some relatively minor concerns about the soundness of some of the jobs and the amount of freedom that was available, but believe that another year our familiarity with the program will enable us to deal with these matters more effectively.

Our most profound reservations about the program are philosophical. We watch all the praise pour in. Most employers were enthusiastic; many students claim it was the most important thing that has ever happened to them. But we remain skeptical and cautious. We speculate about what this all adds up to and question by what criteria an experience like this can be understood. As a staff who, although still young, are really the product of another system, we cannot avoid feeling threatened on some level by a program which so basically calls the academic approach into question. We see that this program released incredible amounts of productive energy, that the students exercised more self-discipline, wrote more articulately, and showed greater curiosity than they do in most of our classes. And there is no doub' that for some students this provided a very valid learning experience. But, at the same time, we question very seriously an approach which seems so oriented to the concerns of the present, so hostile to academic pursuit and so disinterested in intellectual and cultural heritage.

This brings us to ways in which we felt very separate from some of the students. Many seemed gratified only by immediate results, concerned only with their own needs, and intolerant of any task demanding organization or commitment. These attitudes disturbed us and we fear that this program with its independence and variety fostered them. Our disagreement with these students does not, however, qualify us to judge their experiences. Our values may be different, but this does not mean that Alternate Semester was not personally very significant for them.

It is also important to realize that there was a wide range of attitudes among the students and there were many to whom none of our reservations apply -- students who did plan their units with great care, who made large commitments, and who worked hard on projects, the results of which they will never see.

Despite all our doubts we stand strongly in favor of this program. What convinced us was listening to the students in their final evaluations. We hear them saying how important it was that they planned Alternate Semester and had real decision making powers in its creation. We feel this student role was a unique feature of this program, and if Alternate Semester is to be as successful another year, students must once again determine its goals and content.

We also hear them saying how profoundly Alternate Semester affected them. If in fact this is true, if they do feel significantly better about themselves, if they do feel they have exercised control over their education and assumed responsibility

for the direction of their own lives, then we most definitely believe it is worthwhile.

We also look at ourselves and find that despite all the difficulties, we have come to understand and care for these young people in a way that never would have been possible in a classroom. We think we have a better comprehension of their needs, a clearer idea of what is important to them and thus a far sounder justification for our involvement in education.